

Whitley Awards 2013

The Royal Zoological Society of NSW presented the winners of the 2013 Whitley Awards at a ceremony in the foyer of The Australian Museum in Sydney on Friday 11 October 2013.

The Awards, first presented in 1979, are a tribute to Gilbert Whitley (1903-1975), who was the Curator of Fishes at The Australian Museum from 1922 to 1964. For many years, Whitley was also the editor of the Society's publications and a very active member of the RZS Council.

The Whitley Awards are for outstanding publications dealing with the promotion and conservation of Australasian fauna. The Whitley Medal and Special

Commendation are the most sought after prizes in Australian zoological publishing.

The Whitley Awards are judged by a Whitley Awards Committee, which this year comprised of Noel Tait (chairman), Arthur White, Adele Haythornthwaite and Pauline Ross. Other members of council and external referees were sought to provide advice and to assist us in our very difficult deliberations.

A Whitley Medal Double for 2013

This year the Whitley Medal was awarded to two very disparate publications:

***A Field Guide to the Damselflies of New Guinea* by Vincent Kalkman and Albert Orr: published in *Brachytron*, the Journal of the Dutch Dragonfly Society Vol 16 Supplement June 2013.**

A Field Guide to the Damselflies of New Guinea is the very first entry to the Whitley Awards on the fauna of New Guinea. It is even more remarkable that it was judged a joint winner of the Whitley Medal for its authors Vincent Kalkman from the Naturalis Biodiversity Centre, Leiden The Netherlands and Albert Orr from

Griffith University, Brisbane. The extraordinary clarity of the text by the authors is matched by the taxonomically detailed and yet exquisitely beautiful illustrations by Albert Orr.

Noel Tait,

On behalf of the Whitley Awards Committee

***Ecology of Australian Freshwater Fishes* edited by Paul Humphries and Keith Walker: CSIRO Publishing, April 2013, ISBN 9780643097438 \$130.**

Ecology of Australian Freshwater Fishes is no less extraordinary. The editors Paul Humphries of Charles Sturt University, Albury, and Keith Walker of the University of Adelaide have coordinated a 'who's who' of 20 Australian freshwater fish experts to produce the first definitive account of freshwater

fish ecology. This is critical at a time when we continue to ravage our fragile freshwater environment and particularly when climate change predicts further dire consequences.

Noel Tait,

On behalf of the Whitley Awards Committee

Below is a transcript of the Whitley Medal presentations and replies delivered at the Whitley Award ceremony.

Field Guide to the Damselflies of New Guinea

The authors, V.J. Kalkman and A.G. Orr, are established authorities, well known and respected in the global odonatological community and have been producing excellent dragonfly books for many years valued for their conciseness and accuracy in text and illustrations.

This Field Guide does much more than its title implies. It is a unique contribution detailing a rich, fascinating and very poorly known aspect of Australasian zoology. It enables, for the first time, a range of people to appreciate the rich and fascinating New Guinea Zygoptera fauna and to easily identify specimens in the field or in collections.

It is pitched equally at a scientific audience, amateur naturalists visiting New Guinea and local workers. It contains a great deal of information in a very concise form, such as understanding relevant morphology, how to interpret diagrams and how to collect and preserve. For the beginner, it would serve as an excellent introduction to the specialist literature. Nevertheless for the experienced and professional odonatologist it provides an invaluable resource - both the plates and accompanying text and the

checklist with distributions in the back give an excellent overview of the subject.

The style of illustration, using paintings of museum specimens in concert with a selection of photographs to capture the jizz of the living insect, is highly successful. The mixture of colour drawings and line art is particularly effective in general attractiveness - the formula draws the readers in, with an immediate overview and then directs their attention to salient details.

The figuring of structures such as the angulated frons in detail and in colour goes a good way to demystifying these concepts for the student. This is unique or almost so in books dealing with odonates.

The tabular keys are particularly effective in guiding the reader to the right area of the text and plates.

The book includes not only information on adults but also illustrates representative larvae which should be of great use to freshwater biologists involved in environmental monitoring programs and for conservation issues.

Although there is a disclaimer that names used in the guide are not used for the purposes of nomenclature, this is actually the first time the new classification of the Zygoptera based on Dijkstra et al's molecular work (to appear in August/

September 2013) has been presented. That classification is radically different from what went before and is likely to be the accepted system for a good while.

That there is also a Bahasa Indonesia text is also a big plus in that it makes the book accessible to locals in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua. The way the two texts are separated there is no confusion or interference, as often happens in bilingual books.

To sum it up: This Guide fulfils all of the Whitley criteria; the information relates directly to Australasian zoology, it makes a significant contribution of new information in text and illustrations with both interacting very well, and it presents a new synthesis of existing knowledge in a markedly more acceptable form than is currently available.

I consider the book highly deserving of a Whitley Medal and I congratulate all those involved in its production.

Gunther Theischinger

Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW, Office of Environment and Heritage NSW

Not too big not too small- just right. For researchers, technical officers (me), students and odonate twitchers, this book is an invaluable resource and a thing of beauty into the bargain. The publication of this book represents a distillation of years of painstaking work into a beautiful, lean and easy to use guide.

The authors frankly acknowledge that there is still much to learn and to describe about the New Guinea damselfly fauna. There will undoubtedly be more to add and update in future years but this is much more than a great start. It is a giant leap.

While the guide is clear and concise and with limited use of jargon, there is sufficient detail to allow its users to quickly and easily become familiar with the relevant anatomy. The text is superbly enhanced by the photos and especially the illustrations. They are at just the right size to see the details without the book becoming unwieldy to carry into the field. I can clearly see from the illustrations just what differentiates one species from another: the arrows helpfully pointing to the appropriate character.

Finally, the section translated in Bahasa along with the illustrations increase the accessibility of this field guide.

Jacqui Recsei,

Australian Museum

Reply by Albert Orr

Vincent Kalkman and I are both deeply honoured to receive this award; particularly as it is for such a modest little book. But it is a little book with a serious purpose. Both Vincent and I strongly feel that the best way to advance the cause of conservation in developing countries is to foster local interest, and for this, concise, non-technical and affordable field guides are needed. This book was written entirely with this purpose in mind, and it has come as a pleasant surprise to us that the leading authorities from around the world, among whom we have distributed complimentary copies, have also expressed their approval. They have been pleasantly astonished on learning of the existence of this strange fauna with strange names of which they

previously knew next to nothing. Because it is intended for use in the field by local workers throughout New Guinea, we also included an Indonesian text aimed at locals in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Brother Henk van Mastrigt and Evie Warikar for providing the translation.

The New Guinea Odonata fauna, and particularly the Zygoptera or Damselflies, is extraordinary in many ways. It has very high levels of endemism; of the 280 species (and counting) of Zygoptera in NG only 15-17 are shared with Australia where some 150 species occur. This difference is true also at higher levels with many family-group taxa not shared either side of the divide. Indeed the New Guinea fauna shows more higher-level affinities (but not shared species) with the Philippines. This is believed to be due to dispersion along now submerged island arcs some 40 million years ago. The New Guinea fauna is also a very young fauna, where there are an exceptional number of extreme, bizarre or unusual forms. Normalising selection, natural selection that tends to regulate the form of animals within a community such that experimental forms are weeded out, has not yet had time to take effect. It is a bit like a Cambrian explosion in miniature.

We were able to produce this book owing to the generosity of several sponsors. In particular, the van Tienhoven Foundation supported us from the beginning in 2010, and covered about half of all expenses. We were also supported generously by The Dutch Dragonfly Society, the van Der Hucht der Beukelaar Stichting and the German-based International Dragonfly Fund. The IDF also produced an online brochure requesting further donations by illustrating members of the genus *Palaeargia*, an endemic and particularly beautiful genus. More than sixteen individuals responded, four individuals or couples contributed 1000 euro or more and all four will soon be honoured with eponyms of their choosing. The appeal was so successful that we exceeded our needs, and so begin with a healthy war-chest to produce the sequel, the Anisoptera, or true dragonflies, of New Guinea.

The Ecology of Australian Freshwater Fishes

To my knowledge, this is the third book on Australian freshwater fishes to receive the Whitley Medal. The first, back in 1981 was *Freshwater Fishes of South-Eastern Australia*, edited by the late R.M. (Bob) McDowall to which I had the privilege of contributing together with 17 other specialist authors. The second was *Freshwater Fishes of North-Eastern Australia* by Brad Pusey, Mark Kennard and Angela Arthington. All three of these authors have now also contributed to this current award-winning volume. I had the privilege of presenting the Whitley Medal to these authors back in 2005, as I now again am delighted to present this year's Medal to the editors of this present volume this evening.

I note that Paul Humphries has chosen his favourite galaxiid species (*Galaxias truttaceus*) from his youth to grace the cover of the present volume, and in fact he was of the next generation of young ichthyologists to work on this most interesting group of southern hemisphere, cool temperate fishes after Bob McDowall, Roger Frankenberg and myself started working on them back in the 1960s. And a young Keith Walker and I both shared the pleasure

of being mentored by the late Professor W.D. (Bill) Williams in things freshwater biological, together as postgraduate students at Monash University, also back in the mid 1960s. And so much of the commendable work that has been carried out since then by these two fellow fish scientists is fairly familiar to me. Paul, who is primarily a fish biologist with a strong interest in the history of Australian zoology - an interest that is strongly reflected in the first chapter of this book - is now with the School of Environmental Sciences at Charles Sturt University at Albury; and Keith, who is more of a broad spectrum river ecologist, with a particular interest in the Murray-Darling system, is now retired from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Adelaide, but remains as an adjunct member of staff there.

Turning to the book itself, while some ecological ground was covered in the two previous books mentioned above, there had remained a great need to synthesise the wealth of ecological information that has been accumulating over the past several decades. This present medal-winning volume has now most admirably attempted, and largely achieved, this synthesis of the ecology of freshwater fishes Australia wide.

This new book takes a broad synecological approach to the subject, dealing with the ecology of our freshwater fishes on a theme by theme basis, rather than the primarily autecological, or species by species approach taken in the two previous books mentioned above.

The book is thus arranged in a most logical and sensibly hierarchical manner, the chapters ranging as they do from a general historical introduction to the overall field of Australian freshwater fish studies and ecology by our two editors, through various discreet thematic subject area chapters written by one or more specialist authors on biogeography, evolution and biodiversity, habitats, movements and migration, trophic ecology, reproduction and early life history, age and growth, population dynamics, assemblages, introduced and invasive species, and conservation and management, to finally conclude with a summary chapter, which also addresses "the future", again by the two editors. Including these two, there are 23 specialist authors in all, and these represent the contemporary cutting edge of freshwater fish biology and ecology in this country; as well as a few more seasoned old veterans of my own generation who also lurk there amongst them.

In addition to this very comprehensive coverage of the subject matter, there is also an appendix table listing all of the currently known 255 or so native Australian freshwater fish species, and also the 40 or so documented alien species (though an extra column showing the broad distributions of each of the native species would have also been useful here). There is a very comprehensive bibliography comprising nearly 2000 references to the subject areas covered, and also indexes to all of the fish species mentioned therein, including both their common and scientific names, and the detailed subject areas discussed.

The logical hierarchical structure of the book allows the information in each of the preceding chapters to enlighten those that follow, and particularly the important penultimate chapter, which addresses habitat and species conservation and management issues. And

one might also say the same for the temporal progression of the continent's fishes themselves, from the "Ghosts of Gondwana", through the gradual development of a unique (~90% endemic) continental fauna of primarily marine origins, to the possibly depleted and homogenised Australian freshwater fish fauna of the foreseeable future.

In this latter regard, the editors rightly point out in their final chapter that the future "disaster scenario" postulated by myself and my colleague Jenny Burchmore back in 1986 (Pollard, D.A. and Burchmore, J.J. in *Limnology in Australia*, eds P. De Deckker and W.D. Williams, CSIRO, Melbourne, and W. Junk, Dordrecht, 1986) has thankfully not - or at least not yet - come to pass. The "year 2000" was chosen there to represent both a future century and a future millennium, rather than that specific year itself, and this hypothetical "worst case scenario" exercise was designed more as a warning about what could eventually happen if the main environmental problems that were present back then, including that of alien species, were not addressed. Some of them since have been, but most of them really haven't - maybe a case of a glass half full, or a glass half empty there, depending on which way you look at it. As our two editors and co-authors of this final chapter concede, "An implicit message in the scenario for 2000 was its acceptance of a common perception that, for many native fishes, the future is one of decline and extinction, and that for alien species it means further spread and more new arrivals. In that context, the scenario referred to trends that are clearly evident today, and to events that still might occur." I suppose that it will be those who come after us who will, one way or the other, eventually find out. And as the editors themselves point out in relation to their own "scenario for 2050", "the aim is not to challenge Nostradamus but to provoke argument and discussion".

In digging into the book in more detail, some other points that struck a chord were that while a number of our freshwater fish species, such as the Murray cod, were extremely economically important in our inland areas up to around a hundred years ago, today it is really only alien fish species (mainly common carp) that are now present in commercially harvestable numbers though recreational fisheries for a few of our more iconic native freshwater fish species still remain important. Ecological rather than economic sustainability is thus now the main issue in this regard. Some similarities are also noted and comparisons made with aspects of northern hemisphere freshwater fish ecology and environmental conditions, but it is the differences here that are probably the more striking (e.g. the lack of natural freshwater lakes; and the usually much hotter and drier, and generally more variable and harsher environmental conditions that prevail, and may in the future be exacerbated on this southern continent of ours).

In the latter context, this book could have probably benefitted from a separate dedicated chapter on the predicted effects on our freshwater fishes and their habitats of anthropogenic climate change, although this is mentioned in passing by a number of the authors, and also addressed briefly in the final chapter. And a colleague, and fellow reader of an advance copy, has also pointed out to me the absence of a chapter on behavioural ecology - both of which topics might be considered further in a future edition.

Overall, however, this is a most excellent book, and I would recommend it to not only all of those who are involved in researching the ecology and management and conservation of freshwater fishes in this country, but also those involved in environmental and conservation biology of aquatic systems, and particularly river system management issues. This book would also be of interest to the many enthusiastic and knowledge-thirsty freshwater anglers and aquarists out there, and also the more scientifically inclined members of the fish-loving public in general.

So, congratulations to the editors and the authors, and also to CSIRO Publishing, for this significant contribution to our knowledge of our freshwater fishes and their ecology. And, were he still with us, I am sure that the great Gilbert Whitley himself would have been very pleased indeed to see this excellent volume awarded this prestigious Medal that now bears his name.

David Pollard

Honorary Associate The Australian Museum

Reply by Paul Humphries and Keith Walker

Gilbert Percy Whitley was an extraordinary ichthyologist and historian, and we are immensely proud to both honour his legacy and accept the 2013 Whitley Medal for *Ecology of Australian Freshwater Fishes*. Our book draws on the ideas of 23 authors from our vibrant community of freshwater 'fishos', and many others whose publications are cited within. As the book was a shared enterprise, the honour also is shared.

We would also like to pay tribute to our publisher, CSIRO Publications, for their sterling support and their commitment to other books of this genre.

The book's reception confirms our belief that there was a need for a synthesis of knowledge of Australian freshwater fishes. It was planned as an introduction to the subject, to encourage resource managers, students and others to learn more and perhaps venture into research, so that the need for still another synthesis will soon emerge. In a fast-changing world, with immense pressures on our native fishes and their environment, we trust that the book will also encourage a conservationist's perspective. The same sentiment appears in Gilbert's writings from years ago, and we can be sure that it would have had his wholehearted endorsement.

Having the citation conferred by Dave Pollard, who has contributed so much to Australian fish biology, was especially pleasing. On behalf of our authors, our sincere thanks go to the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales through the Awards Committee and the President.

Whitley Special Commendation Award to Penny Olsen

Over the years, Penny has been a regular contributor to the Whitley Awards and this year the Royal Zoological Society has seen fit to recognise her outstanding support for promotion of Australasian fauna and its conservation through her many outstanding publications. She was editor for many years for the award winning ornithological journal *Wingspan* now *Australian birdlife*, awarded the 2013 Certificate of Commendation for the Periodical category.

Many of Penny's publications are handsomely illustrated with images held by the National Library of Australia, the coordinators and publishers of her engaging and informative text. The most recent of these is the winner of this year's Certificate of Commendation in the category of Historical Zoology, *Cayley & Son: The Life and Art of Neville Henry Cayley & Neville William Cayley*. Neville Cayley's ground-breaking book, *What Bird is That?* is a classic of Australian natural history, first published in 1931, almost 50 years before the advent of the Whitley Awards.

Penny is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University.

Noel Tait Chairman of the Whitley Awards Committee and unanimously approved by the RZS NSW council

Penelope Diane Olsen – 2013 Whitley Special Commendation Award

Most of the Whitley Awards honour specific books published within the past year. The Special Commendation differs because it is based on a body of work over a longer period. As such, it permits more discussion of the author than do normal citations. The recipient of the Special Commendation this year is Dr Penelope Diane Olsen, a noted ornithologist and gifted author. She is recognised nationally and internationally as an expert on diurnal and nocturnal raptors, groups on which she has conducted research for 30 years.

Penny completed her honours on *Antechinus* at The Australian National University in 1969, moving to the then CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research as an experimental officer working on water rats and feral mice. Although officially studying small mammals (aka raptor food), she began her own side projects on birds of prey. One of these was the effects of pesticides on reproduction in these birds, particularly egg-shell thinning caused by DDT. CSIRO appointed her as an Honorary Research Associate in 1982. She took a break through much of the 1980s, although playing a major role in the work on the conservation and recovery of the Norfolk Island Boobook, whose population had been reduced to a single female.

Penny completed her PhD at the Australian National University in 1991. She became a Postdoctoral Fellow at that Institution from 1994 to 1997 looking at aspects of behaviour and reproduction in a population of Peregrine Falcons that she had been following for 20 years. Currently, she is a Visiting Fellow at ANU Research School of Biology, where she has and continues to supervise a number of PhD students, not all working on raptors. For several decades, Penny has been an advisor to a number of government bodies and a member of several national and international scientific bodies. In 1997, the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union presented her with the prestigious D.L. Serventy Medal for "excellence in published work on birds in the Australasian region". She took on the role as editor of *Birds Australia's* (now *Birdlife Australia*) magazine *Wingspan* (now *Australian birdlife*) in 2003, remaining in the job until 2009. Penny was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2011 for "service to the conservation sciences through the study and documentation of Australian bird species and their history"

One of her principal approaches to this service has been through her writing. Over her career, Penny has displayed the uncommon but enviable ability to write for a broad spectrum of the community. This does not mean that she is not a serious practicing scientist—quite the contrary. She has published more than 65 scientific papers in refereed journals. In addition, she has written a number of chapters, including several in the renowned international series, *Handbook of Birds of the World*, edited several books and is a frequent compiler of the annual *The State of Australia's Birds* produced by BirdLife Australia. Her popular articles have appeared in a range of magazines such as *Wingspan*, *Nature Australia* (formerly *Australian Natural History*) and *Geo*. In addition to papers and articles, Penny has authored almost 20 books, including a few for children.

A feature that characterises all Penny's work is her success at marrying the scientific and historical in a manner that is accessible to layperson and scientist alike. It can be a hard task gleaning out the little bits of archival information that have never been published, but in this she succeeds well. Birds are the subject of most books, usually from a perspective on art and/or history. In all, there is a strong scientific current flowing through them. A notable approach to disseminating information is her collaborative projects with the National Library of Australia. These have made public many hidden treasures in the Library's collection of paintings, including topics on parrots, botany, butterflies and the impressions of early Europeans on the strange Australian wildlife.

Penny's record for accumulating Whitley Awards is perhaps second to none. During her period as editor of *Wingspan*, the publication won Awards on a number of occasions. She picked up her first Whitley Award for a book in 1996 for Best Popular Zoological Publication with *Australian Birds of Prey*. In 2002, her book *Feather & Brush: Three Centuries of Australian Bird Art* won the Whitley Award for Zoological History, as well as receiving the The Australian newspaper's award for Excellence in Educational Publishing. The 2006 Award for the Natural History of an Iconic Species went to Penny's book, *Wedge-tailed Eagle*. The National Library of Australia awarded her a Harold White Fellowship in 2004 to support research on the Paradise Parrot. This resulted in her book *Glimpses of Paradise: The Quest for the Beautiful Parrakeet*, the 2008 Whitley Award winner for Zoological History. Penny contributed the chapter *Night Parrots: Fugitives of the Inland* to the 2009 Whitley Medal-winning book *Boom & Bust. Bird Stories for a Dry Country* (eds L. Robin, R. Heinsohn & L. Joseph). Her winning streak continued this year with the Award in Historical Zoology for her book *Cayley and Son: The Life and Art of Neville Henry Cayley and Neville William Cayley*.

This award-winning output makes it abundantly evident that Penny relishes the responsibility of communicating science, a practice that shows no signs of slowing down. Also published this year is her latest collaboration with the National Library, *Collecting Ladies: Ferdinand von Mueller and Women Botanical Artists*.

Penny has demonstrated a consistent and ongoing commitment to presenting natural history to a wide audience. As such, she is a worthy recipient of the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales' Special Commendation 'for her outstanding contributions to the promotion of Australasian fauna and its conservation'.

Walter E. Boles,
Australian Museum

Reply by Penny Olsen

I'm very honoured to receive the Society's commendation. How fortunate to be rewarded for doing something I so love: writing about the things I care about. Having just returned from a tour along the ancient northern Silk Route, crossing China and Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan, I'm feeling particularly fortunate to have grown up when I did, in this wonderful country, to enjoy the career of my choice, the clean air, abundant wildlife and wild places. That's not to say that there has not been change, sometimes for the worst. In my lifetime we've lost the Gastric Breeding Frogs and Pig-footed Bandicoot. The population of the Orange-bellied Parrot has plummeted from hundreds to around 20 breeding birds in the wild, the Regent Honeyeater from thousands to perhaps 400. But these things are relative. In China, I scarcely saw a bird.

I grew up knowing that I wanted to work with animals. For a brief time, after a visit to La Brea tar pits as a 9-year old, long dead animals beckoned. My mother was perplexed. Still, a biologist, I became. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and the unexpected impacts of pesticides on wildlife led me to raptors. As Canberra's raptor expert, I ended up rehabilitating injured and orphaned birds of prey. My kids grew up thinking it was normal to have buckets of frozen rats and mice thawing in the laundry.

I'm still rapt in raptors. I began writing the odd popular article about them and in the 1990s got the book bug. Learning that I was to be given this award for my body of work made me ponder why I write books. I know how I came to write them: it was simply serendipity—one thing leading to another, just as I find that research for one book leads to ideas for others. I get great satisfaction from synthesising the science, and enhancing it with gleanings from art and literature.

I decided that I write for two main reasons, the first self-indulgent. I research and write for my own curiosity and the associated thrill of discovery. I make the books that I would like to read, including the visual aspects. The other reason is Thoreauian and much more noble! I write 'to speak for what cannot speak'. I believe that writers have certain responsibilities and that through our zoological writing we are showing concern with the processes of the natural world and our human position in it. By sharing our understanding of animals, we are demonstrating respect for their lives and this compassion is central to our humanity. In these and other surprising ways, it can be argued that popular zoological writing links the sciences and humanities. In my case, I've gone a step further and have begun to write about the people involved in natural history. I'm still a bit startled about that. It's not something I ever expected to be doing.

I feel privileged to be able to write about my passions and, especially in these tough times for the publishing industry, to have opportunities to be published. Publication is very much a team effort, so I'd like to acknowledge the contributions of the wonderful people I've worked with

over the years: most recently from the National Library of Australia and CSIRO Publishing. I'm also grateful for some early encouragement from the University of New South Wales Press. Not least, I applaud the Society for their much-needed support of zoological publication.

The Whitley Awards also include Certificates of Commendation in various categories. This year 12 publications were awarded. Commended are:

Children's Reader

***Boo and the Big Storm* by Wendy Lawrence and illustrated by Glen Vause: Wild Publishing, October 2012, ISBN 978064657779 1, \$24 99.**

The Boobook owl is the most common owl in Australia, it is also the smallest. They are beautiful birds and are named after their distinctive call which sounds like 'boo-book'.

This is a touching book written by Wendy Lawrence, about a Boobook owl called Boo. Boo falls out of her nest during a storm into the middle of the road. She is picked up by farmer Goodwin and taken back to his farm where he looks after her. The next day, her rescuer takes her back to her nest where she is reunited with her parents. Wendy Lawrence has done a great job of using language to describe how Boo is scared and frightened of farmer Goodwin and makes the big storm sound very frightening. But the story finishes with a heart

warming happy ending. The illustrations by Glen Vause are hilarious. Boo is illustrated with huge eyes, which show a range of funny expressions, from surprise to confusion. This book is also informative and tells readers about some threats to the boobook owl and how to help wildlife in trouble.

I think that this is a great book for younger readers and their parents about an owl's big adventure. This is an entertaining, funny book that I think people will have a great time reading and having a laugh at the illustrations.

Congratulations to Wendy Lawrence and Glen Vause.

Leo Haythornthwaite,
Year 7 Sydney Secondary College, Balmain

Children's Story

***Lyrebird: A True Story* by Jackie Kerin and illustrated by Peter Gouldthorpe: Museum Victoria Publishing, November 2012, ISBN 9781921833045, \$16 95.**

The Superb Lyrebird is one of our iconic bird species. Its ability to mimic beautifully the calls of many forest birds, and many other sounds, is well known. The male's courtship dance is truly memorable, as he fans his magnificent tail feathers over his back and richly sings through his repertoire of borrowed songs.

In this book written for children, the author Jackie Kerin tells the story of an encounter between an elderly lady and a resident lyrebird. Edith Wilkinson lived in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria in the 1930s, and found herself befriended by a male lyrebird whom she named 'James'. She did not feed the bird, but it became a frequent visitor and would regularly display on a platform she built specifically for the purpose outside her window. Ambrose Pratt, a keen naturalist who was the president of the Royal Zoological Society of Victoria, visited Edith to observe and record James's behaviour. In fact, James became quite well known, and was the first lyrebird to be broadcast on radio and one of the first to be filmed and photographed in display.

Jackie Kerin has interpreted this story beautifully, imaginatively describing the evolving relationship between the elderly lady and the maturing bird. Along the way, we learn many things about lyrebirds – their distribution and range, habitat, diet, appearance as

immature and mature birds, and of course, behaviour and song. We learn also of the threats to these birds' survival as a consequence of habitat destruction when the nearby forest is cleared for housing. All this is told in a lyrical and warmly descriptive style that is appealing to young readers.

The illustrations by Peter Gouldthorpe are great; he captures the spirit of the story perfectly, and his depictions of the lyrebird are clear, accurate and full of life. He has also included at the back of the book illustrations of the other birds likely to have been found in Edith's garden, and whose songs the lyrebird would have imitated.

I think that this story will inspire young readers to find out more about our wonderful birds, particularly the importance of preserving their habitat. Perhaps some will be inspired to view birds in a new light, with a sense of wonderment. I am sure that many young readers, and their parents, will derive a great deal of pleasure in reading this book.

Congratulations to Jackie Kerin and Peter Gouldthorpe.

Adele Haythornthwaite,
University of Sydney and RZS NSW Councillor

Children's Book

Deepsea Whale Rescue by Jan Ramage and illustrated by Mark Wilson, Western Australian DEC, May 2012, ISBN 9781921703157, \$26 95.

This is a story of a whale and human adventure. The story commences with divers watching Whale Sharks along our beautiful Western Australian coastline. After a successful morning of watching Whale Sharks, they see a mother whale and her calf explode from the water. But these are not the only whales in the ocean – they are being chased by an aggressive pod of Orcas. The Orcas move fast and try to separate the mother and baby so that they can hunt down the calf and make it their next meal. The mother whale decides that this is not going to happen. Seeing the launch in a series of manoeuvres, she rescues her calf by positioning it between herself and the dive boat. The Orcas eventually give in and depart to hunt tuna. Only then do the divers find that the mother whale is entangled by nets. Luckily other fisherman in the area witnessing the entrapped whale call the whale rescuers. With the weather changing and the swell getting bigger, the whale rescuers, in a set of difficult manoeuvres, untangle the mother whale from the net. Both mother and calf then

head off continuing their migration along the coast, just like 17,000 whales are doing right now along the Australian coastline.

I learnt several things about whales from this book. Whales are huge, but graceful creatures, species of whales can disagree with each other and we need to keep whales alive. Whales in our world need to be free to roam and no one likes Japanese whaling. I also enjoyed several features of this book, the story line, which had despair and then resolution, the illustrations inside illustrations. Several pages had a main picture and then several smaller pictures in boxes. The last pages included facts on whales where children could learn more.

Jan Ramage is an awesome author who constructs plots with great imagination. The illustrator Mark Wilson should be famous if he is not already.

Raphaela Rotolo-Ross,
Year 4, Abbotsleigh Junior School

Young Naturalist

Topsy-turvy World: How Australian Animals Puzzled Early Explorers by Kirsty Murray, National Library of Australia Publishing, October 2012, ISBN 9780642277497, \$29 95.

Topsy Turvy World by Kirsty Murray, published by the National Library of Australia is a wonderfully unique kids book. It tells the stories of how the early European settlers encountered and interacted with Australia's weird and wonderful wildlife. We do have some really weird animals; many people know the story of how the platypus, perhaps our weirdest mammal, was sent back to England and thought so unlikely that it must have been some scientific cockatrice, half duck half mole. This book tells these stories for other iconic Australia animals; kookaburras, emus, tassie devil, sea dragons - species that Australian kids that have grown up here will take for granted as part of Australia- but to newcomers and outsiders they really are quite bizarre.

The language takes kids back in time to capture the feeling of these first encounters. In doing so, it tells a story of a transplanted culture coming to terms with its new world. Kids love animals and this book adds a Horrible Histories angle to how our wildlife was first viewed and treated, sometimes horribly. I read the echinda's story to my 7 year old, which tells the story of Captain William Bligh's encounter with one in 1792 - when landing in Tasmania hungry for meat shot one, then struggled for words to describe what they saw. He thought it was some kind of sloth, but when roasted was quite delicate in flavour. It then

goes on to tell how early zoologist puzzled over how it had such a small beak that barely opened, had fur so had to be a mammal but had no nipples so how did it feed its young, and it was thought to lay eggs. Baffling to zoologist a world away in England and still one of the great oddities of zoology.

The book was inspired by Penny Olsen's book *Upside Down World*, which I found a fascinating read. *Topsy Turvy World* successfully puts these stories into a language that younger kids can understand. It also adds the conservation angle, telling the stories of the fates of some of these animals. I also read the story of the Pig Footed Bandicoot to my 7 year old and he was genuinely saddened about its fate; captured, eaten, its story hardly unraveled at all before it was gone, all within a few decades. Throughout the book this conservation message is a strong and effective one. It also has a special section for each animal on what Europeans need to learn to not make the errors and mistakes they first made, which is great, learning from mistakes of the past. It also has the key facts about each of the species, which of course kids of 6-10 are ever hungry for.

So Topsy Turvy World is a worthy winner of Whitley Award for the Best Young Naturalist book 2013.

Peter Banks,
University of Sydney and President of the RZS NSW

Explorers' Guide

Exploring Tidal Waters on Australia's Temperate Coast by Phil Colman and Peter Mitchell: Groundtruth Consulting, June 2011, ISBN 9780645531115, \$25

Both Phil and Peter have lived colourful, creative and inquiring lives because their lives have been based around our biodiverse and fascinating coasts. Phil Colman among other skills was an expert in Malacology here at the Australian Museum and Peter Mitchell says on the backcover of the book that “he doesn’t know what he is anymore”. To know what you don’t know is a sign of a real expert. Phil was born in Inverell and Peter was born in Moonie Ponds where natural and city elements dictate life. I think they have lived the dreams of many Australian children fascinated by the shores where the tides dictate life. Phil acknowledged this in his inscription on the inside cover of the book to the committee “My enjoyment in exploring rock pools as a kid has culminated in this book”.

This is a book about the stories of the temperate rock shores; the stories that only experts know. The titles of each chapter provide us with some insight into these stories including; sticky mysteries, oddities of reproduction and drifting barnacles. Some examples include the improbable story of how Linnaeus named two common forms of Lepas barnacles after geese and ducks. It was originally thought that these goose and duck like barnacles were in fact juvenile geese and ducks, which arose spontaneously on floating wood. The shell of a stalked barnacle was considered to be the beak and the feathery cirri or barnacle legs, the immature features. It was said, that these young barnacles thought to be birds, held on until they were mature enough to fly away. Barnacles have always fascinated biologists from Aristotle to Darwin. Mysteries are revealed in the book, such as the oddities of barnacle reproduction, who like many other marine rocky shore invertebrates have complex life cycles,

unlike anything that could be imagined. Who could imagine that the larval life we see in the plankton is related to life on the shore? Similarly, the text provides us with explanations for the source of the holes found in small bivalve shells washed up on the beaches. These are caused by drilling activity of predatory gastropods. There are other chapters devoted to the myriad of ways to die and the age and longevity of organisms on the shores. For example, some live for 12-15 years while others live and reproduce for 100-200 years.

These surprising pieces of information have been compiled by Phil Colman and Peter Mitchell as a way of sharing their understanding of the shore. This text is not the standard identification guide and this is what distinguishes the text from others. This text explains in a unique way the mysteries and stories of the shore. It reminds me of another book – called the “Gift of the Sea” by Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wife of Charles Lindbergh that was published several years after the kidnapping and death of her 20 month old son. She talks about the seashore as a gift, how it nourished restored and surprised her through the best and worse of her life.

Phil Colman and Peter Mitchell know this and their book is a gift to us who love the oceans and work to ensure their conservation. An essential part is teaching an appreciation of the sea to the generations who will need to preserve it.

The book is available at Berkelouw Books Mona Vale and Dee Why; or The Coastal Environment Centre in Narrabeen, (all \$22), or groundtruthmitchell@gmail.com (\$25 incl. postage).

Pauline Ross,

University of Western Sydney and RZS NSW councillor

Illustrated Zoology

Grassfinches in Australia by Joseph Forshaw and Mark Shepherd and illustrated by Anthony Pridham, CSIRO Publishing, August 2012, ISBN 9780643096349, \$185.

Thanks to the persuasive powers of Noel Tait I have two confessions for you tonight.

The first is to out myself as a birder, I hope my marsupial research colleagues will understand. The second is to confess a lifelong love affair with Australian grass finches. Some of my earliest memories were being mesmerised by the grassfinches kept by my grandfather in his backyard in suburban Punchbowl in the late 1960s.

So I eagerly anticipated the release of this book, the first monograph dedicated to these avian jewels for many decades. The good news is that the wait was worth it, because this book does not disappoint on any level.

The art work by Anthony Pridham is superb and beautifully captures the essence of each species in natural poses in their natural habitat – something this book makes look easy even though it is not. The large format of the book not only evokes the feel of the great wildlife monographs of the 19th century but also it allows the detail and subtlety of the illustrations to be fully appreciated.

You could just buy this book for the illustrations, but if you did, you would be missing out, because the text is also excellent and highly informative. The book is thoroughly researched, comprehensive and authoritative, containing much new information from recent studies. Essentially everything you would possibly want to know about Australian grass finches is included. For some species, like the Zebra Finch, there is now an enormous amount known. However, other species remain relatively poorly known. Joseph Forshaw and Mark Shepherd have done an excellent job with the text being not too heavy but highly accessible and easy to read. The format and layout of the book also make this an enjoyable book to read and navigate.

So it gives me great pleasure to present a Certificate of Commendation in the category of Illustrated Zoology to *Grassfinches in Australia* by Joseph Forshaw, Mark Shepherd and Anthony Pridham.

Mark Eldridge,

Australian Museum

Historical Zoology

Cayley & Son: The Life and Art of Neville Henry Cayley & Neville William Cayley
by Penny Olsen, National Library of Australia Publishing, March 2013, ISBN
9780642277893, \$49 99

The presentation of this award for Historical Zoology appeals to my sense of the aesthetic and the appropriate. Neither of which is particularly obvious in most things that I do. This book also has appeal on many levels.

First, this is an award for a biography of the author and illustrator of arguably the classic and hence most influential of all books written on Australia's natural history. *What Bird is That?* was first published in 1931, nearly 50 years before the instigation of the Whitley Awards and incidentally eight years before I was born. I obtained my copy on 12th May 1956 at the beginning of my last year at high school, this was recorded by me on the inside cover so I am not relying on memory. I still have it and it is stuffed full of fading magazine clippings about birds.

Second, this book is extremely beautiful in its production and presentation. I saw my first copy displayed in my local independent book shop on a table among the latest glossiest publications, books on travel, cooking, architecture, gardens and the like. Even among this lavish company, it stood out so much that my first reaction was to hug it to my chest. It fits beautifully.

Third, the text by Penny, as always with her many and varied books, is factual yet lively. It is full of insights and

anecdotes. My ignorance is astonishing. I did not even know that Neville William Cayley's dad Neville Henry was an artist of considerable talent. In fact the illustration of the two chubby contented kookaburras on the dust jacket is from a painting by the father. Perhaps they symbolise the father and son.

The text chronicles the lives of the two men and each account is accompanied by a lengthy and lavish portfolio of their art. There are also many photographs of the time, such as surfing and sunbaking, scandalous activities at that time.

Fourth, Neville William Cayley was a member of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW and served as president for several years. The Society in those days was housed in the dome of the now exquisitely restored historic upper entrance to the Zoo. We are now housed in a much more modest location.

So much praise to the National Library of Australia for the production of this book and in doing so displaying its extensive collections for the general public and for Penny Olsen for the fine text that holds it all together.

Noel Tait,

Macquarie University and RZS NSW councillor

Natural History

***Australian Lizards: A Natural History* by Steve Wilson: CSIRO Publishing,**
October 2012, ISBN 9780643105406, \$49 95

Australian Lizards is a book about a love affair- the affair was between Steve and the scaled creatures that so mesmerised him from childhood through to adulthood. Not everyone feels impassioned about reptiles but most people are impressed by their endurance, abundance and diversity. *Australian Lizards* shines a light on the world of Australian lizards that few people have experienced and it is a wonderful read.

Steve Wilson has been besotted by reptiles since he was conceived. Steve worked as an Information Officer at the Queensland Museum for 25 years. His job was to interpret the scientific information and translate it into understandable everyday English and to make it sound exciting. It was an opportunity to hawk the world of reptiles to an unsuspecting public. It also provided a vehicle for further investigating these animals in new ways.

Steve has written various articles and papers about Australian reptiles over the years but is probably best known for *the Complete Guide to Australian Reptiles* co-authored with Gerry Swan and now in its fifth edition. His interest in reptiles led Steve to the world of photography and he has an amazing set of images of reptiles from Australia and south-east Asia. Quite a few of these images are used in *Australian Lizards*- they are a superb back-up to a compelling text about lizard life.

The book is simply written and meant for general consumption. It is still Steve's intention to re-educate the masses and let them know what they are missing out on. I have lifted a paragraph from the preface of the book so that you will understand his position. "Was I alone in being able to see the blindingly obvious, like the tale of the emperor with no clothes? I have learned over the decades to accept that not everybody sees lizards in the same radiant light as I do. Very few people are completely enraptured by the charm of lizards. Reluctantly, I now realise that it takes a wide range of people to make this world, even if most of them are wrong!"

I thoroughly recommend *Australian Lizards* to anyone who is not conversant with lizards and would like to enter this other world. The text is suitable for adults and well-read juniors. There are many boxed inserts that explain specific points and many photographs that portray lizards in their daily life. It is well referenced and believable.

Congratulations to Steve Wilson and CSIRO Publishing for opening up another window on Australian wildlife in such a heart-felt way.

Arthur White

Environmental Consultant and RZS NSW councillor

Periodical

***Australian Birdlife* edited by Sean Dooley and Cara Schultz, BirdLife Australia, September 2012, ISSN, 22000127, \$15.**

As a member of Birdlife Australia (initially the RAOU) for more than 40 years, I have been following the plot with respect to their publications. I note that the Royal Zoological Society of NSW has given awards to *Wingspan*, edited by Penny Olsen, and now, in a new iteration, Birdlife Australia's journal is *Australian Birdlife*.

The journal is easy to read, and a delight in that it presents viewpoints, it contains striking photographs, and the articles are well written and/or well edited. What is also striking is the sheer size of the journal – 82 pages – yet it is still able to be produced quarterly. This is a vast achievement, and itself deserving of the award. In my opinion, the editorial team of Sean Dooley and Cara Schultz, like all editors, deserves much of the credit. In fact, it was because I am a co-editor of the RZS NSW journal *Australian Zoologist* that I was asked to present this award. Noel Tait, the chairman of the Whitley committee, was delighted that I knew the journal, had my own copies, and had read them.

Let me pick up a few little pointers to the diversity, the clarity and the highly opinionated nature of the journal. I hasten to add that I appreciate the opinions, they are all advocacy for bird conservation, bird watching, or just appreciating the diversity of birds and the issues that they face.

I shall read the first paragraph in the editorial of the latest edition of the journal (Vol 2, #3, September 2013) with the brilliant cover photo of the famously elusive night parrot: "Recently I had my first taste of North American birding with a day trip into the New Jersey woods. It had been a long time since I had experienced the thrill of seeing dozens of new birds in one day, but in the dizzying rush of hummingbirds, woodpeckers and American warblers in their summer finest, I still had an odd sense that something was missing. There were no parrots! And the countryside felt emptier for it."

In saying this, the editor, Sean Dooley, had expressed his excitement about seeing birds, his sense of being an Australian bird person, and a feeling for countryside.

Let's return to the meaning of opinionated writing. If we turn to p 11 (Vol 2, #3), the article carries a strong opinion, even in its title: "Martine Maron wonders whether it might be time to control Australia's avian despot". Again, on p 22 (Vol 2, #3), is Penny Olsen's paper: "A lament. The sad history of the Orange-bellied Parrot." Penny's paper gives a fascinating brief history of this parrot. I selected it 30 years ago for an ecology text book, which I co-authored and co-edited with Harry

Recher and Irina Dunn (Recher *et al.* 1986) as an example of a bird in trouble and for its fascinating migratory pattern. It is good to see even more information, and Penny has rendered the story as an interesting piece of history, biology and conservation. I must add that I am sceptical as to whether an imaginary \$3,000,000 spent annually to conserve all threatened Australian birds (some 250 taxa) is enough. The Orange-bellied Parrot would need a fair bit of that hypothetical allocation in the paper cited by Penny (McCarthy and Possingham 2012).

Let me flick back to the first edition of *Australian Birdlife* for this year (Vol 2, #1, March 2013), and the interesting piece by John Peter, Birdlife Australia's senior research writer. He is discussing the importance of marine reserves, and he notes that some of the most productive sites in our waters will not be protected. He discusses the insidious black rat, wreaking a terrible toll on our native wildlife. He then mentions some neat work on rats by Catherine Price at the University of Sydney, and quotes Price. I am curious as to whether it was an interview, or a quote from a paper, and if the latter, it would be good to have a reference. (Aren't editors terrible people, just looking for something critical to say about the writing of others!)

Now to my final comment: the photo of the editor (p 4) in the March 2013 edition of *Australian Birdlife* (Vol 2, #1). It is the same photo as in September 2013 – I always thought that editors age rather quickly, it can be an exasperating job, and one day his image might show the effect, if Sean is game enough to update the photo.

So, congratulations again on a well-produced, well-edited, large, regular, engaging journal that is not only good for bird specialists, but carries messages that go well beyond birds.

Dan Lunney,

Office of Environment and Heritage NSW and RZS
NSW councillor

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Zoological Resource

***Australian Bird Names: A Complete Guide* by Ian Frazer and Jeannie Gray: CSIRO Publishing, May 2013, ISBN 9780643104693, \$49.95.**

If you've ever wondered why one of the common names of the Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculina*) is the Hircine Magpie, then this is the book for you. I had read in George Caley's diary from around 1800, that currawongs "made very good eating, except the hinder parts, which have a strong goatish smell", but until I referred to this book, I had never made the connection between the Latin word *hircus* – a billy-goat – and the Currawong's hircine flavour.

The blurb says that this is a book for lovers of words and birds, and I would add "trivia buffs". It is a fascinating and comprehensively-researched book, which makes a very useful reference for anyone with even a casual interest in birds. I must admit that I was fearful when I opened a book on names that it would be one of those "storm-in-a-teacup" arguments about preferred names. Refreshingly, the authors have adopted the currently-accepted Australian taxonomy, used those scientific names without argument, ordered the entries phylogenetically and kept to their brief of uncovering the derivations of the scientific names and vernacular origins of the multitude of common names that birds have attracted.

The book is very well referenced and includes a plain-English introduction to the processes of classifying and naming animals, as well as a useful guide to pronunciation of Latin names. I also enjoyed the potted histories of the prolific name-givers of Australian birds

including Gould, White, Lewin, Leach and Mathews. It is very thoughtfully written, indexed and edited, while including just the right amount of humour.

As an example, my favourite bird is the White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura albifrons*), or the White-fronted Refined-tail as it translates. I was pleased to discover that, unlike my Ph.D. thesis on this species, the authors had spelt its Latin name correctly. I was also impressed by the long list of common names including, "White-faced Epthianura, Tintack, Banded Tintack, Gar, Tang, Banded Tang, Clipper, Tripper, Nun, White-fronted Nun, Tasmanian Bush-chat, Dotterel, Baldyhead, Ballyhead, Moonbird, Moony, Bumps, Ringlet, Ringneck and Single-bar", as well as a new one for me: "Thistlebird", which the authors comment is "somewhat mysterious as it rarely eats seeds". But I congratulate them on their inclusiveness – I know that Chats make use of ephemeral nest sites, and in some weedy habitats, I have often noted that the base of thistle rosettes is a preferred nest location – so I'm calling them Thistlebirds from now on.

I thoroughly recommend this book both as a comprehensive (336 pp) user-friendly guide to the names of Australian birds, and as a fascinating insight into the relationship between birds and the people whose lives have been enriched by them.

Richard Major,
Australian Museum

Invertebrate Guide

***A Guide to Australia's Spiny Freshwater Crayfish* by Robert B McCormack:
CSIRO Publishing, July 2012, ISBN 9780643103863, \$59 95.**

If I say "freshwater crayfish", a reasonable proportion of people will know what I'm talking about. But, if I say "yabby", suddenly, everyone knows — OK, that's our subject. Now the taxonomist in me will insist that the term "yabby" really should only be used for a select few species of freshwater cray, but I'll let that slide – nowadays, for most Australians "yabby" and freshwater cray are the same thing. Freshwater crayfish and Australians have a special relationship. Almost everyone has at some time gone out catching yabbies. However, we are also a world hotspot for freshwater crays. The southern hemisphere freshwater crays are ancient, Gondawanian creatures, and most of the survivors occur only here – about 150 species in 10 genera. We have the smallest and largest species in the world. So, scientifically and ecologically, freshwater crayfish are very important.

To the book. I love field guides, especially this one by Robert McCormack. It's a major contribution to field guides and is about one genus of freshwater crayfish – *Euastacus*. They are called, spiny freshwater crayfish, because, well, they can be very spiny. They live in eastern Australia, mainly in forest creeks east of the Great Dividing Range, and number about 50 species – almost every catchment or drainage has its own endemic species, raising potential conservation issues. All along eastern Australia, if you see freshwater crayfish in a bush stream or creek, chances are it's one of these.

I said I really like this book, and I must declare that I don't come without bias. I have a particular interest in freshwater crayfish and I've have been aware of this book

since its early stages through many discussion with Rob on all sorts of crayfish matters. He has spent many hours in the Museum, studying specimens to ensure that he has his identifications correct. And I have to say, Rob is one of the most enthusiastic crayfish people I have ever met.

Getting any book to publication is a big achievement. However, the modest size and very neat organisation, great production values (and here, full credit to CSIRO Publishing) do not tell the full story. Rob pursued every known species of *Euastacus* to photograph in colour, make research collections, and document its habitat. This was no mean feat, with long hours in the field and on the road, digging, searching...in one case, he needed help from a helicopter in North Queensland just to get to the unique mountain top site. Most species have never been seen in colour before – but now, here they all are.

More than that, we also have new information on geographic ranges and notes on biology and habitat – all backed up by voucher collections. There is new scientific knowledge here. And for the specialist, taxonomic diagnoses – as *Euastacus* is probably the most difficult genus of freshwater crayfish to identify. Thus, we have not just a field guide but also a useful scientific tool. Thus, I want to congratulate Rob McCormack and CSIRO Publishing on this great little book, and note that there's only another 100 or so species of Australian freshwater crayfish to go for the next field guide!

Shane Ahoyong,
Australian Museum

Vertebrate Guide

***Birds of Prey of Australia: A Field Guide* by Stephen Debus: CSIRO Publishing and BirdLife Australia, September 2012. ISBN 9780643104365, \$39 95.**

It is a privilege to be here tonight and to present this award. My name is Paul Maguire and my role is Manager Visitor experience and learning – so it is my job to ensure not only our visitors have a great day out but also they are inspired to act for wild. We use a “connect-understand-act” model – and I have to say one of the best and most impactful connect animals are birds of prey which happens to be the focus of this amazing book.

In the bird show we fly Hobby Falcons, Whistling and Black Kites and Peregrine Falcons – we even have three Wedge-tail Eagles in training. Most of these birds have been rehabilitated after injuries. The impact of a bird of prey skimming your head as you sit in the amphitheatre is powerful. There is something deep in our psyche that resonates with these beautiful birds.

After each show, we have a large number of people who stay to ask about these birds of prey. Our visitors find them so magic and engaging – and often they ask us about good field guides. So to be able to recommend this excellent

publication is wonderful. I had the bird show team review the book and indeed they were very impressed with the content and the amazing images. They all learned new things – and were particularly impressed with the wing pattern when soaring and flying.

It was great for me to check the behaviour of Slammer our Black-breasted Buzzard who will crack plaster eggs to get a treat using a small rock – thus called Slammer. This book confirmed such behaviour – Chinese whispers with animal stories at Taronga can be an epidemic – so it was reassuring to have that validated as a legitimate bird fact!

So congratulations to Stephen Debus on this new revised edition – pleased to hear it sold out originally in 2001 – the more bird lovers the better as far as Taronga is concerned. I wish you every success with the book and we look forward to recommending it to our more engaged and inspired zoo visitors.

Paul Maguire,
Taronga Park Zoo and RZS NSW councillor

For further information contact

Dr Noel Tait, Chairman, Whitley Awards Committee, RZS NSW
phone/fax: 612 9427 6747; mobile: 0419 4119 67; email: noelrobyn@bigpond.com



Whitley Presentation

◀ Wendy Lawrence, the author of *Bo and the Big Storm*, receiving the Children's Reader award from Adele Haythornthwaite.

▶ Noel Tait moving the microphone for our youngest presenter Raphaela Rotolo-Ross before she presented the Children's Book award.





◀ Mark Wilson, the illustrator of *Deep Sea Rescue*, receiving the Childrens Book award from Raphaela Rotolo-Ross.

▶ Peter Banks, president of the RZS NSW, presenting the Young Naturalist award for *Topsy-turvy World: How Australian animals puzzled early explorers*.



◀ Phil Coleman (left) and Peter Mitchell receiving their award from Pauline Ross for *Exploring Tidal Waters on Australia's Coast*, the winner of our Explorers Guide award.

▶ Mark Eldridge (left) presenting the Illustrated Zoology award for *Grassfinches in Australia* to Mark Shepherd (centre) with Briana Melideo of CSIRO publishing (left).





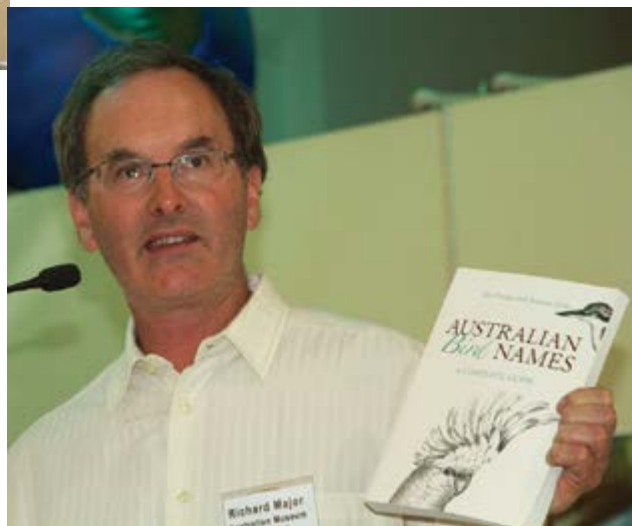
◀ Noel Tait presenting Penny Olsen with her award for Historical zoology for her book *Cayley and Son: The Life and Art of Henry Cayley and Neville William Cayley*.

▶ Arthur White presenting the award for Natural History, with Briana Melideo of CSIRO publishing (left) accepting the award for *Australian Lizards: a natural history*.



◀ Dan Lunney (right) presenting the award *Australian birdlife*, with his able assistant Noel Tait.

▶ Richard Major presenting the award for Zoological Resource for *Australian Bird Names: a complete guide*.





◀ Richard Major (left), with recipient Jeannie Gray (centre) and Briana Melideo of CSIRO publishing (left) accepting the award.

▶ Shane Ahuyong presenting the award for Invertebrate guide and Briana Melideo of CSIRO publishing (left) accepting the award.



◀ Paul Maguire (right) presenting the award for Vertebrate Guide to Stephen Debus (left) and Briana Melideo of CSIRO publishing.

▶ Albert Orr (left) accepting the Whitley medal from presenter Jacquie Recsei and Noel Tait for *A field guide to the damselflies of New Guinea*.



◀ Dave Pollard (centre) presenting to a line-up of the editors, the Whitley medal for *Ecology of Australian Freshwater Fishes* to Paul Humphries (right of Dave) and Keith Walker (left of Dave) and Briana Melideo of CSIRO publishing (second from left). To the far left of the photo is John Harris, to the far right is Angela Arthington, representing the numerous authors in the book, with Noel Tait, as usual, having insinuated himself into the photo opportunity, second from right.



◀ Keith Walker giving the acceptance speech on behalf of the other editor, Paul Humphries, the authors, and CSIRO publishing, for *Ecology of Australian Freshwater Fishes*.

▶ Presenter Walter Boles with one of the numerous books that earned Penny Olsen her Whitley Special Commendation.



◀ Penny Olsen receiving her Whitley Special commendation, from presenter Walter Boles (centre) and you guessed it, Noel Tait to the left.



▶ Penny Olsen giving an acceptance speech for her Whitley Special Commendation.



◀ Participants in the Whitley awards ceremony in the grand foyer of the Australian Museum on 11 October 2013.



All photos, Robyn Stutchbury and Dan Lunney.